

Franklin County Children Services

newsrelease

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Children Services selects new leader

The Franklin County Children Services Board voted unanimously at a special Board meeting Sunday to appoint Eric D. Fenner as Executive Director of the agency, effective February 1, 2007, pending agreement on a contract. Fenner will replace John Saros, Children Services' Executive Director since 1994, who announced in January that he would not request an extension of his contract, giving the Board a year to find his successor.

"He's the right leader for Franklin County Children Services at this time," said Board Chair Kent Markus. *"Eric made it clear to the Board during our interviews that he is ready to do whatever it takes to help the families and children of Franklin County through collaborative work with the staff, the court, the community and our service providers."*

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~ Board Chair Kent Markus.

Fenner has been the Deputy Executive Director of Children Services since 2004. In his 28 years of child protection and other youth-related employment, Fenner has worked twice at Children Services. In his first 11 years he was a weekend case aide, caseworker and group services coordinator before leaving in 1988. He returned in 2001 as Children Services' Director of Employee Relations, and was promoted to Director of Program and Placement Services prior to his promotion to Deputy Executive Director. From 1989

until 2001, Fenner was Director of Staff Development, then Deputy Director of Human Resources for the Franklin County Department of Human Services; Assistant Court Director for the Domestic Relations and Juvenile Branch of the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas; and Associate Director of Ohio Youth Advocate Program, Inc.

"During the past five years I have been increasingly impressed with the positive contributions Eric has made toward achieving our agency goals," Saros said. *"I am extremely pleased with the Board's decision and look forward to watching Eric take Children Services to even greater accomplishments in the future."*

"I am humbled at the opportunity to lead Franklin County Children Services, and appreciative of the efforts of the Search Committee and the decision of the Board," Fenner said. *"I am aware of the challenges facing our agency in the next few years – keeping more children with their families, improving community relations, negotiating a new union contract in 2008 and conducting a successful levy campaign in 2009. But I look forward to February 1, and getting started on building the relationships and collaborations that will make it possible to achieve our vision of strengthening families and providing safety and permanence for children."*

Board Chair Markus appointed a 19-member Search Committee, representing a broad spectrum of the community to conduct the search process. The Search Committee, headed by Board Member Marjorie Frazier, began meeting in April. The Committee conducted a nationwide search, attracting 69 candidates from across the country. Committee members sought input from more than 40 community stakeholders, and conducted



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For more information contact
Kay Marshall - 614-275-2521

interviews with four finalists for the position. Each finalist had a two-day interview that included meetings with Children Services staff and community leaders and stakeholders.

"We looked at candidates from New York, California and dozens of other locations in between, but we also remembered that it's often important not to look past the talent in one's own back yard," Markus said.

"We thank the Board and the Search Committee for their hard work leading up to this important decision," said Paula Brooks, President of the Franklin County Commissioners. *"We look forward to Mr. Fenner's successful administration of FCCS on behalf of Franklin County's children."*

Franklin County Children Services is the agency mandated by Ohio law to provide protection and care to abused and neglected children. Services are provided to strengthen family life to enable children to remain safe in their own homes. When children cannot remain with their own families, the agency provides temporary care in foster homes or in residential facilities, or permanent homes with adoptive families.

In 2005, Children Services provided help for 29,251 children through direct services by the agency and by purchasing services from provider agencies.

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